

Boston, (Mass^{ts}) March 30. 1854.

Dear Mr. Webb -

I duly recd. yesterday morning your full, friendly, frank, & most welcome letter. There are points in it - there is particularly one point in it - about which you have been led into so great a mistake, that I cannot in conscience let one steamer leave our shores for yours, between the coming of your letter, and the going back of this my reply. That point is the "Standard"; its value to the cause, and the reasons for sustaining it. I was well aware that, formerly, Parker Pillsbury had thought not highly of the Standard's usefulness, & that others, such as Stephen Foster & Abby K. Foster, had in a measure shared in those opinions. But I had no idea that P. P., or any one, thought so now, and I confess to a feeling of entire astonishment at learning that he represented to you that the "Standard" was "but little read here", and was supported "chiefly with reference to the cause in G. Britain". In this feeling W. L. Garrison, & Wendell Phillips, to whom I successively, & separately, read your letter, ~~participated~~ ^{concurred} most entirely with me; & the latter expressed his apprehension that at Bristol, & elsewhere, P. P. would repeat the same mistaken views. Now it is certain that we always have had, and that we still have, ~~a~~ a very high respect for P. Pillsbury's judgment, forecast, & good sense, and unlimited confidence in his zeal

and devotion to the cause. And this mistake of his, - if it be his, & not your misapprehension of his meaning, - will not lessen our confidence in his devotion to the cause, nor impair our deep reliance upon him; for we never supposed him, any more than any other man, to be infallible, and I have only to say, in this matter, that he has made a mistake, as all are liable to do; a pretty serious mistake, to be sure, and one which, if spread, will cause us much labour before the anti-slavery mind is disabused of it.

Now it is certain that the "Standard's" subscription list is not large, - never has been large, and, under the last year or two of Mr. Gay's sole editorship, rather lost ground in this respect. This led to the change, a year ago, by which Oliver Johnson was brought to New York, & made ~~the~~ Associate Editor, - a change exceedingly propitious to the paper, and in other respects which I will hereafter mention. With Mr. Johnson's aid, the Standard has visibly, & essentially improved, and has become, without controversy, one of the most able & interesting journals in the land. - To all which you will reply, that you do not doubt this, I never have; but that it is of small avail to the cause of Antislavery, if the "Standard" be not read; so indeed you say. But this is a mistake: one of P.P.'s greatest mistakes.

The "Standard" is read, with care and appreciation, by those who do read it. It is a paper which makes its mark, and cannot fail to do so. And who are its readers? Not the flippants, not the hurried devourers of news, not the mere common & superficial minds, who neither read, think, nor act, for themselves. If the circle of readers of the "Standard" is small, it is such an audience as is better worth speaking to, for their own sake, & for Anti Slavery's sake, than 10,000 of the swimmers with the current, or of those whose anti-slavery cannot break away from either political or 'religious' fellowship with Slavery & its Defenders. This class of its readers are educated, intelligent, & principled against Slavery. Their education, or their tastes, or their indifference to the discussion of Bible, Sabbath, & other 'Reform' questions, lead them to look upon the Liberator as a paper unsuited to them. ^{And no paper would meet their wants on slavery, if the Standard died.} Then there is the class who are inquiring as to the true Character, the history, and the designs of Slavery; this is an increasing class; & if the 'Standard' were discontinued, there is no general paper, devoted wholly to this subject, which would uncompromisingly unfold to them the whole evil, & its rightful remedy. There is the opposite class, who are looking to some authorized organ, to know what

the Abolitionists propose to do - what their position is, what their principles, and how they expect to accomplish their ends. For these also, there ought to be an accredited source of information.

Then, what would the American A.S. Society be able to accomplish without a special journal? It would be, comparatively, without a voice; it would be utterly without a voice as regards a very large class of the population of the country. By means of the "Standard", it keeps its own friends awake and informed, and suffers not its enemies to forget that it is up and doing in Freedom's cause. We must expect, and content ourselves as we best may with the fact that, in the present supremely sluggish, or hostile & pro-slavery, sentiment of the country, such a paper as the "Standard" is - "without concealment and without compromise" - will have but a few supporters, and not many more habitual readers. But I think the cause is well served by keeping that Standard ever floating in the air. Thousands & tens of thousands know of its existence, and of its radical and unqualified hostility to Slavery, who could not be induced to take it, though they might occasionally read it, as opportunity offered.

Then it is of the utmost importance - as all our Committee believe, - to keep a

firm foothold for Radical Anti-Slavery in the
 City of New York. That City is the national metrop-
 oli, & has more influence than any three
 others (to say the least) on the national opinion
 and action. Without a printed journal, of
 a character like the "Standard", this foothold
 could not be maintained, - i.e. to any effective
 purpose. The Society might have a name to
 live, and put up a sign over ~~some~~ official
 rooms; but it would not, for it could not,
 make itself felt upon the city, & the community
 affected thereby. Within the last year, and
 under the superintendence of O. Johnson, as
 one of the Editors of the Natl. A.S. Standard, a
 New York City A.S. Society has been organised,
 and that Society set on foot, & has most triumphantly
 carried through, a course of 13 Lectures on Slavery,
 which may be said, without fear of contradiction,
 to have been the very best course on that subject,
 ever carried out in this country. They have
 attracted attention over the entire country, - even
 to N. Orleans. - All this might have been done,
 possibly, without a paper, it may be said. But
 I am confident it would not have been done; nor
 would any such A.S. Society have been formed, as
 that which now exists & flourishes in the City of N.Y.

Now I have endeavored to show you that the "Standard" is read here, in this country, - read by a very fair number, and too by an intelligent & influential circle, whose ear it is of great value to the cause to obtain, and whose countenance & support is, I fully believe, secured to the cause, (amidst the almost numberless temptations to betray it with which the country teems) by the influence mainly of the "Standard."

I can only say, with regard to the allegation that the "Standard" is kept up chiefly with reference to the cause in Great Britain, that it is not so. And it would take the testimony of a man, fully as good and reliable as R.D. Webb is known by us to be, to lead us to believe for an instant, that P. Pillsbury had made, in his sober senses, such a statement. We do indeed think it highly important that our friends abroad, and the increasing number in your Kingdom who (as we hope) are becoming interested in the world-wide question of American Slavery, should have an authoritative, able, and regular exponent of the faith & works of the American Abolitionists; and we regard it as no small part of the "Standard's" usefulness, that it does this work so well; but ~~it~~ to say that

it is the "Chief", or even a principal reason why it is kept up, is simply absurd, even though said by so true-hearted and noble a brother as P. Pillsbury. If we knew that never another copy of the "Standard" would cross the salt sea, or ever encounter again an English eye, the paper would be sustained here, all the same, so long as we were able to support it. -

Indeed, my dear friend, this Anti-Slavery movement must be a broad & national one, - must be divorced from parties & from sects - must teach men that there is nothing sacred on the earth in God's sight - & ought to be nothing sacred in our sight, - but Man, - the creature, servant, & Child of God.

To be & to do this, it must of sheer necessity have a permanent & regular means of operating on the public mind & conscience. Take the Standard away, & what paper would do this? The Liberator, certainly, to some extent, - with those minds which have fully arrived at the point of discussing every conceivable subject, - even whether God has rights, and what they are. The Pa. Freeman

to some extent, - its locality, and
not greatly beyond that, which is the
States of Pennsylvania and Delaware, &c.
The A.S. Bugle also to some extent - a
paper which few see east of the Alleghany
Mountains, & which also introduces the
discussion of the Bible, of the Woman Question
and nearly or quite every other question of
radical reform, into its columns. - So
we cling to the "Standard", and increase
so, - with hope and trust for the future,
and with the confidence that it already
has done, and is doing now, much good.
A year, or 2 years ago, this groaning over
the "Standard" would have had more
show of reason. But, as Garrison strongly
said, to allege these things now, when the
paper has been put on quite another footing,
when O. Johnson has added so much to its
efficiency and its interest, and ^{helped to make} ~~added~~ it one
of the most attractive & valuable papers
which even the "Old Guard" of Antislavery
can find in the land, filled him quite with
surprise. - So I have disturbed my
mind on this subject. I would fain have believed
as Garrison & Phillips would too, that you had, for
only partial conversation, not understood Pillsbury
thoroughly; - but you expressly say you had to
or full conversations with him. - [Your letter is now
by me now. I lent it to Phillips, by his request.]

On these several points, I sh^d. certainly have written to P. Pillsbury. But, in the present critical state of his health, it would not be right to trouble him with a word. So I content myself with saying that every word of the foregoing may be shown to him, whenever he is in a fit state to see it; nay, more, I would like to have him see it, - would rather than not that he should see it. I have nothing to conceal on the subject from him, and have nothing to establish, in the premises, or to uphold, but the integrity and the well-being of the Anti-Slavery Cause.

We are all, without exception, not pleased only, but delighted to find that our old war-worn veteran has made so agreeable an impression on our friends in Dublin and in Bristol. They have had no difficulty in finding his mind & his heart; and there, we knew, would commend him, wherever they did become known. - His poor health, and especially his senile illness at Bristol, have caused us pain, & latterly no small anxiety. But Mary Estlin has most faithfully kept us, - including Mrs. Pillsbury, - informed of P. P.'s state, & of the opinions of his physicians, & of his prospects. Young Dr. Field (of Weymouth in this State - now studying medicine in London, & who went to Bristol to see his old friend Pillsbury) has also written several very acceptable letters. We still await tidings about P. with solicitude; for our letter yesterday, though representing him as having

much less pain, - scarcely any, indeed, - and an improved appetite, and a little more strength, yet spoke also of the effusion of water on the chest, not having been arrested, and that his amendment, if real at all, was very slow.

Of course, we look with great interest, to every fresh letter. Miss Estlin really expresses gratitude that the care, & nursing of our good Pillsbury in this his severe illness have devolved upon her father and herself; very little, beyond advice, is it that Mr. Estlin can do indeed, to aid in the care of him. But he has so cordially, & with so much genuine sympathy and ~~hearts~~ courtesy, opened his house, & heart, and purse too, that P. P. feels it all most deeply, and has repeatedly expressed it. - I had a very few words from him yesterday, heaped by himself - rather unsteadily, but it was Pillsbury himself.

Anti-Slavery Office,
21 Cornhill, Boston,
Friday, March 31.

Edmund Quincy coming into the office this morning, I have read the first 2 sheets to him. He thinks I have not stated the number of readers of the "Standard" high enough. He thinks it will average ten persons to a paper, and he fully coincides with me, as to the character & general influence of those who, in the main, constitute the "Standard."

audience. — Another point he suggested, which I should myself have thought of — it is the influence of the "Standard" upon the Newspaper Press of the Country. It has a very large exchange list — (is taken in the Slaveholding States, indeed, where the Liberator cannot go, on account of the incendiary picture at its head, as well as on account of its notoriety) — it "exchanges", i.e. (the "Standard" does) with more newspapers South of Mason & Dixon's line than any other A.S. paper published in the Free States. The Washington "Era" probably has a somewhat larger Circulation South; but that paper is a poor exponent of vital Antislavery. It has to be very cautious indeed, to maintain its existence in the District of Columbia. — I have urged Quincy to write to you, as he is your old correspondent, — an "older & better soldier" in the cause than myself, — and, as I most sincerely feel, much better qualified to lay this subject before you.

Now for other matters:

Mary Shackleton has not yet appeared. I will cheerfully do what is in my power to aid her.

I forwarded note to F. Douglass; also one to Sarah Pugh. In your note you speak of intending to enclose notes for requesting the Era, Standard, & F. Douglass's paper, now sent to Dublin A.S. Society, to be discontinued. But only a note to F. Douglass (of

the above 3) came - & that, as before said, I have forwarded; - I presume that contains the request for the discontinuance spoken of. And I don't understand whether, as the notes haven't come, you expect me to order the other discontinuances, ^{viz. the Era & Standard,} or not. I will therefore do nothing about it, till I hear again from you; especially as I would prefer new instructions as to the payment of money to the "National Era", on account of Hannah Webb & John Webb. It is in that part of your Note which was erased, but which you afterwards asked me to read as not erased. But the erasing lines passed over the money figures in such a way as to leave it a little uncertain what those figures were, tho' I think they were £2.10. But please say if the amount is to be equally divided in the 2 subscriptions. Much particular is desirable in these accounts.

As to the arrangement I proposed (at Anne Weston's suggestion) about Powell: - It only related to the opening of the Bazaar box, & distributing the parcels designed for Eng^d, Scot^d, &c., and had by no means the ^{idea} ~~thought~~, as you appear to ^{suppose} ~~think~~, to make him an agent & general A.S. Agent in G. B., instead of our long tried and invaluable one at Dublin. By no manner of means! I was doubtful (as I expressed myself to you) whether it were ~~even~~ best to let the box be opened in Liverpool, even for the single purpose of distrib^g. a portion of the bundles, (thereby saving you some trouble, and a trifling expense to the cause). But I am pleased to find you feel about it as you do, and are so willing, and much more than willing, to do this indispensable service for the Cause. - It is plain, from your statement, that W. P. Powell is not well situated to do our work economically. -

Once more as to the "Standard". - W. Phillips has been in, and I have shown to him also what I have said to you about the Briar. - He wishes me to state that Stephen and Abby K. Foster have entirely changed their opinion, as to the usefulness & necessity of the St., and now estimate it most highly, and regard it not only as very useful, but as absolutely indispensable. They are as good judges in the case as most persons amongst us can be. - Phillips lays much stress upon the value of the "Standard", in its influence on the newspaper press. We have had instances amongst us - I dare say you have ^{had} in your country - of journals being supported at a great expense (in whole or in part, thus supported,) on account of the influence exerted by them upon the general newspaper press, and so upon the public mind of the country.

I do not know but that you had better send ~~these~~ this note of mine - for want of a better ^{statement} - to Mary Estlin. Perhaps P. P. may have communicated to them similar views about the Standard. If so, I wish her to know that probably not a single other one of all our company coincides in the opinion he expressed, as ^{stated} ~~quoted~~ by you, - though it is true that some few others have, at times, questioned the expediency of paying so much as we do to keep up the Standard. And she could take some proper opportunity to ~~caution~~ ^{mention} the thing to Pillsbury, & ask him, in our name, to be as careful as he consistently can, what he says on the subject. Nearly every one of our Committee

and leading friends — here, in New York, and
in Philadelphia — I mean to include Garrison,
Sumner, Phillips, Anne Weston, McKim,
the Chittys, &c. &c. — is strong and clear as
to the great value of the Standard — indeed, of
its indispensable necessity.

You sent me six penny stamps, for
which I will give you credit. —

What you say about the Nebraska
Question, and about the state of mind thereby
developed, is well said. I do not wonder
that you are lost in amazement, as you look
upon this land. We are, here, often bewildered;
for myself I cannot learn fast enough the
~~thick~~ lessons this country affords of the depths
to which human nature will descend, in order
to subserve its selfish ends, — to refrain from such
astonishment and disgust, ~~which~~ ^{as} no dictionary
at my command is sufficient to give vent to. —

— Still, we have been having some quite
hopeful developments of Northern feeling, which
you will have noticed before ~~reading~~ receiving this.

— The North is more thoroughly aroused than
I ever before knew it to be. There is more
of an antagonistic feeling than I ever have
known before. The infamous Bill will be
passed, and passed this Session I do not doubt.
Blood will be shed, if necessary, to intimidate.

But passed, or not passed, the South and its friends have given us such a specimen of their duplicity and fraud, as the Northern people will not be likely to forget.

Once again to the Standard; for Garrison has just come in from Portsmouth, N. H., and I have eagerly embraced the oppo. to get his criticism on what I have written. He "endones" me, as the American phrase is. He says, "I have always said that we might as well give up the cause here, as to suffer ~~our~~ organ to go down." This is emphatic enough.

But Garrison differs with me, as to the propriety of showing any of this to Pillsbury, on account of P.'s sensitive feelings. He might consider (G. thinks) that I stated some of my points too sharply, and it might make a difficulty. — I should be very sorry to make a difficulty, & did not anticipate that. I have always written & talked very freely with Pillsbury, and I meant to have you understand that I had no wish to conceal anything I said on this subject from him. — Act as you please, therefore, about it. As your remarks to me were private, so let this reply be, if you choose. Only, as P. P.

may repeat at Bristol what ~~you~~ say
he said at Dublin, about the "Standard",
I think (and in this Garrison agrees
with me) that Mary Estlin had better
see this.

If you should endorse it
"private" - or mark it so at the head -
she would receive it, without danger of its
going farther; and it could be left wholly
to her discretion, to say anything to Pillsbury
or not as she chose. -

W. Phillips has a letter from
you to-day. -

Time all gone. Farewell.

Ever truly Yours,

Samuel May Jr.